

This PhD thesis deals with inequality and democracy in Brazil, Argentina and Chile. These three countries are particularly relevant, as all of them experienced some of the most notorious and most violent dictatorships in Latin America between the 1960s and the 1980s, all of them lasting for more than three decades, before the third wave of democratization. The three countries therefore share similar challenges in their path to democracy, but can also show outstanding progress.

The thesis takes into account the time span from 1990 to 2015, which is particularly relevant as it both marks the third wave of democratization, and it also mirrors the development agenda, allowing to evaluate real progress through sound, robust data, and to see whether the MDG agenda managed to create a more equal and more inclusive world.

The choice of examining inequality and its relationship with democracy is due to the current growing interest that the topic of inequality is gaining worldwide: as a matter of fact, while in the past the main efforts were diverted towards the fight against poverty, which resulted in the most extensive fight against poverty ever, as stated by former UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, nowadays, the new focus is on inequality, its growing impact on the political structures and all the consequences it entails. Events such as Brexit and the election of Donald Trump as US President are, for example, the result of the growing social and economic inequality and the erosion of the middle class, as rightly argued by Oxfam International in their 2017 report on inequality. Yet, they might also be a product of the political regimes in place, which might have produced more inequality than ever.

This thesis focuses on the political consequences of inequality. In this framework, poverty, which is the other major global challenge, is still relevant to the research, however, with a different perspective: poverty is analyzed as a means of comparison, given the fact that much has already been achieved and done in this respect, and the real challenge in the developed nations, as stated by many distinguished scholars such as Piketty, Stiglitz, and Milanovic, is inequality, which can however impact the important progress achieved so far in the fight against poverty, as stated by both Oxfam International and the World Bank. Moreover, inequality can also impact the important efforts made in regards to the process of democratization in the area, and at global level, as it creates a less just society.

This doctoral thesis is divided into four main parts, and a final chapter containing conclusions and policy recommendations. Each part is made up by two chapters.

Part 1 contains two chapters: the first chapter, which focuses on the relationship between poverty and inequality, explains why it is more relevant to study inequality and what is the relationship between poverty and inequality. It also formulates the research question and explores the recent developments: how and why inequality has become such a growing concern over the last few years. Empirical definitions of the concepts of inequality and democracy, which are multidimensional difficult concepts, are provided. Mainstream literature up to the present is also presented, including the current debate on why inequality endangers our civil society and its democratic structure.

The second chapter restricts the research by focusing on the region of Latin America. It presents the main achievements and issues of the continent, with particular reference to Brazil, Argentina and Chile, on which the research focuses. Mainstream documents such as the Human Development Reports by the United Nations Development Programme, as well as reports by the World Bank, Oxfam International, Latinobarometro, and other United Nations agencies are critically

discussed to analyze the context on which research will be conducted. Also, groundbreaking research on poverty in the region carried out by the Oxford Poverty Human Initiative is quoted and linked to the issue of social and economic inequality with respect to different political regimes, with the aim of better framing and understanding the underlining issues of the region.

Part 2 of the thesis explores the relationship between inequality and democracy in Brazil. The first chapter reviews the achievements of the 25 years of the Millennium agenda, to see how Brazil has progressed in these 25 years, and how such achievements might contribute towards a more democratic country, with less inequality. The second chapter explores democracy in Brazil in the time span 1990-2015 and then evaluates the relationship between poverty, inequality and democracy with data analysis, elaborating from the 2011 definition by Morlino of quality of democracy.

Part 3 of the thesis explores the relationship between inequality and democracy in Argentina, just as it did for Brazil. Here as well, the first chapter reviews the achievements of the 25 years of the Millennium Development Agenda, to see how Argentina has progressed in these 25 years, and how such achievements might contribute towards a more democratic country, with less inequality. The second chapter explores democracy in Argentina in the time span 1990-2015 and then evaluates the relationship between poverty, inequality and democracy with data analysis, here as well stemming from the definition by Morlino of quality of democracy.

Part 4 of the thesis explores the relationship between inequality and democracy in Chile, our last country of analysis. The first chapter reviews the achievements of the 25 years of the Millennium Development Agenda, to see how Chile, this time, has progressed in this regard, and how such achievements have contributed towards a more democratic country, with less inequality. The second chapter explores democracy in Chile in the time span 1990-2015 and then evaluates the relationship between poverty, inequality and democracy with data analysis, using the concept of quality of democracy.

In Part V, chapter 9 concludes the research by carrying out comparative analysis of the three countries, trying to answer the original research question, as formulated in the first chapter: how inequality impacts democracy in the three countries that experienced some of the most violent dictatorships in Latin America, according to the indicators selected and the results inferred from data analysis. Finally, criticism to current and past policy measures, as well as policy recommendations are presented, highlighting new paths for research, in order to clarify a very complex issue, an issue that has become one of the most urgent issue in our world, and which can have future implications that can extend to other domains, such as policy migrations, economics, political science and sociology, just to name a few.